

MY CHILDHOOD IN A NON-CHRISTIAN LAND

By Chung W. Cho, Berea College Berea College

This is a personal account of my own childhood which had fallen under the bondage of heathenism and suffered its sorrow and degradation. For most of you readers perhaps this is the first chance you have had to get first-hand information of the superstitions which are playing a terrible tragedy upon the childhood in the heathen lands. I hope it will be of some interest to you; that it may deepen your relation and love to God; that you will thank Him for not having been a heathen child, and that it may rouse your humane and Christ-like sympathy for those children in the heathen countries who are made the sad victims of deadly superstitions. As I write this article, I cannot help having a profound gratitude for the Christian love of America in sending us their missionaries, who not only save the older people but also bring our children by hundreds and thousands out of misery and darkness into the arms of Christ.

When I was five years of age, just about the period my childhood began to bloom and to possess the experiences of the outer world, a lady and my close relative imprinted upon my mind a sad picture of death. She had no conception of future life whatever and she regarded mortality as the greatest woe and tragedy to man. Her interpretation of death was fearful enough to sadden and horrify any child. Certainly it was a frost blighting my flowery youth.

There was no other thought that occupied my mind more than the fear of death. One night I woke up suddenly in the midnight and had a thought of a strange tendency. Our little cottage was buried in the sable curtains of the night. My father and mother were overcome by heavy slumber, with no sensation of the outer world. The dark miserable night swayed her scepter over the earth, seeming as tho there was no life in the world. There suddenly returned to my mind the same old fear of death. I began to think myself—"I am now a creature with the senses of love, joy, sorrow, and emotion, but when my death comes, which will come sooner or later I will be out of existence forever. I shall have no more the pleasant memories of nature, no more friends to enjoy, and no mother to love." The more I thought of death, the sadder I became. I sighed and sighed, "Ahegho uma! ahegho uma!" (ah, mama! ah, mama!) was the cry. I sighed long and loud enough to awaken my mother who was in a deep slumber, although it seemed nothing was possible to disturb her peace in the last moments.

"My child," said she with a motherly love, "what is the matter? Are you hungry?" (I went to bed without supper that night). "Shall I bring you something to eat?" "No, mama," I replied. "What is it, then?" my mother inquired again. I did not tell her what I was sighing about. I do not know why I did not tell, but even had I told her, I could

not have gotten any satisfactory answer from her because she, too, was a believer in superstition and had no conception of eternal life. My sorrow never ceased that night until I was worn out with weariness and the fatigue which brought me to sleep again.

One day when I was about six years old, I brought a decayed piece of wood into our house. One of my playmates, who was then four years older than I, called my attention to another horrible superstition; that the household gods get angry at the person who carries such unclean things into the house and they bring death upon that person. This playmate told me, with a sort of boyish, heedless sarcasm, that I was surely going to be the victim of our household gods for the unclean deed I had committed against them. Ah, just imagine how I felt then! My old enemy, the fear of death, came and overpowered me again. My heart felt as heavy as tho it had a thousand tons of burden. Waiting for the death to come, I passed many sad days with the pitiful murmurs of sorrow.

In one summer I was very much afflicted with malaria fever. My father believed, as other Koreans usually do, that the evil spirits got into my body and caused a hokgil (fierce illness). He believed also that he could scare and drive the evil spirits out of me by applying a system of superstition. One morning early, when it was very dark, my father called me out of bed, commanding me to go out to the graveyard alone and roll over the grave three times. In our country the father's commands are absolute. I was compelled to obey my father, in spite of my fear to go to the graveyard when it was utterly dark.

The next morning he called me out again to try another superstition. He laid me on the ground and covered me with a carpet, then he drove a big heavy cow over me. What would have happened if the cow had stepped her heavy feet on my chest or neck or head? My body thrills as with an electric shock every time I think of that moment. I do not know whether it scared the evil spirits or not, but it almost scared me to death!

If an American preacher expects his son to become a Christian, a Korean father is far more anxious to have his son follow his ways. He not only wants but compels his son to be an ancestor worshiper as he is. Under the leadership of my father, who was the priest in our family, I became a "little ancestor worshiper." When the New Year came my father took me, my brother, cousins and other relatives around to the different tombs of our ancestors to pay our worship, asking blessings for the New Year. In one straight line we stood and made two bows, each time getting down on our knees.

One festival was arranged for every ancestor each year. The day before the death of the deceased is made the date of the festival and the ceremony takes place in the night. One time, I, with my two older brothers, appeared in ritual robe before the altar, on which was spread

a fascinating table of food for sacrifice. As the exercises were in process, I began to question myself, "Is it true that the spirits of our ancestors come to consume this food on the altar we spread for them? If so, why cannot I see their presence? If it is impossible to disclose the truth physically, why not thru some spiritual means of revelation? I became restless, and at that moment my attention was called to the wonders of nature which were so fascinating that night. I saw the host of stars on high; and the moon, shedding her innumerable beams upon a calm sea, making millions of silvery sparkles down below. In its reflection it seemed to carry the thought to me that there is some unseen Power in the universe. But there was no one then who could tell me there is God, Author of all things, Giver of eternal life, Father of all mankind; there was no one to tell me, also, that heathenism is a sad and vain pursuit.

My miserable childhood was over now, and I was a boy of seventeen when I had the first opportunity of hearing the glad tidings of Jesus. O, how fortunate! Thank God that the American missionaries came to tell us about the new faith, new joy, and new life! We received the missionaries with a hearty welcome as tho they were sent by the angels that proclaimed on Christmas Eve, "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace among men." Our whole family became Christians at once. I was then the happiest lad in the world. I sang and sang. Now Christianity began to mark a new era in my life.

The missionaries not only unveiled the truth of Christ but also reflected the culture and the ideal life of America. Their influence on me was strong, and my ambition was to come to America to train and develop myself to make the best of my capacity for service to God and humanity. But against my plan the chief difficulty was two-fold: (1) obstruction from the Japanese government; (2) opposition from my parents. The first was overcome thru escape. The story of my escape is romantic and thrilling, but I cannot tell it here owing to the limited space. Concerning the second difficulty, I may say a few words. One morning I had a quiet and sincere conference with my mother and father. I made my best effort to convert them to my cause.

At first my mother was unwilling to give me up. Her motherly entreaties were so strong that it was indeed a considerable difficulty to leave her for an unknown length of time, and a remote unseen world.

"My son," said my mother, with a trembling voice, as she sobbed, tears running down her cheeks; "my son," she continued, "when you were attending the missionary schools for the last five years, you came home every summer when the apricots were ripe." (We had an apricot tree on our lot). As she was pointing her fingers to the apricot tree, she said, "Every season I have eagerly looked and watched its budding, blossoms, and its fruiting, because it told me the time and the nearness of your coming

home. And now, when you are there across the water, the apricot tree will blossom again, but you may come home no more." She sobbed again.

Finally she controlled her sorrow and said encouragingly, "I give you my consent because you are going to America with a purpose worth while. We may not see each other again here on earth, but let us meet again before our Comforter up there in heaven."

I was silent for a moment. I thanked my father and mother for their thoughtful consent. I bade them adieu.

I sailed the wide, wide Pacific Ocean, and finally reached the shore of America on which a great Christian Republic is built upon the principles and ideals of Jesus. It is my great joy to learn and cherish the Christian ideals in such a land as America. I adore America for her high ideals. I praise America, for it is the home of the free where God can be worshipped in peace and freedom. What a pride to see the Star Spangled Banner unfurling its glory over the world, proclaiming a motto—"In God we trust."

Note.—Mr. Chung W. Cho has been a student in Berea College for three years. He graduated from the philosophical course and was pursuing his senior work for the degree of B.A. when this article was written. He was one of the most reliable students in the institution, and one upon whom the college may safely depend for carrying her ideals and principles to the far corners of the earth. Marshall E. Vaughn, Secretary of Berea College

Two Men Die

Hatboro, Penn.—Two men burned to death at the Warminster flying field when their airplane burst into flames at an altitude of 750 feet and crashed to earth. The victims were Charles Van Der Vere, a former army pilot, and Harry L. Schaeffer, of Philadelphia, a passenger. Van der Vere had taken a number of passengers on flights during the afternoon and a dozen others were awaiting their turn.

His Deduction.

"Sister Amanda Ellen writes that Niece Geraldine, who is coming to visit us next week, has had eighteen love affairs," said Mrs. Hornbeak, looking up from the letter from her city relative.

"Well, I sh'd wonder!" interestedly ejaculated honest Farmer Hornbeak, "What in time can she do with eighteen imitation ivory toilet sets?"—Kansas City Star.

NEWS REVIEW (Continued from Page One)

To meet the situation, the British asked a meeting in Genoa of the powers signatory to the Versailles treaty to discuss measures to be taken if Germany does not meet the reparations commission's demands by May 31. Premier Poincare objects to this plan.

LOYD GEORGE seems honestly determined both to preserve the peace of Europe and to satisfy the trade demands of the British, which latter are thus expressed by Lord Chancellor Birkenhead: "England's

desperate economic condition, her dependence upon world trade as the only means of sustaining her life blood, make imperative the resumption of political and commercial relations with soviet Russia—whatever the character of the government the Russians choose to adopt." In his eagerness for these results, and perhaps covered by political conditions at home, the premier lays on France the blame for the threatened failure of the conference; and he is valuably supported in that by the English financial "expert," John Maynard Keynes, who according to the Paris press, is in the pay of a group of Berlin bankers. At this distance one is rather inclined to accept the view of the New York Tribune, which says: "The Francophobes and the Teuto-philles are the real factor threatening disruption at Genoa."

Berlin dispatches say diplomatic relations between Germany and Russia will be resumed at once. Prof. A. Bernhard Wiedenfeld will be the German ambassador in Moscow and Leonid Krassin the Russian ambassador in Berlin.

THE hundredth anniversary of the birth of Ulysses S. Grant was observed on Thursday in his birthplace, Point Pleasant, O.; in Washington and in many other places throughout the country. President Harding went to the Ohio town with a large party of prominent men and women, viewed what is left there of the house in which the soldier-president was born, and then delivered an address which was "broadcast" over the land by radio. In the national capital all government business halted while an immense throng gathered in the Botanic gardens to witness the dedication of the magnificent Grant memorial, which is virtually completed after 15 years' work. Vice President Coolidge and Secretary Weeks made the chief addresses, and the memorial was unveiled by Princess Cantacuzene, granddaughter, and Princess Ida Cantacuzene, great-granddaughter of General Grant.

UNLESS President Hsu Shih Chang is able to avert it by his appeal, just issued, the impending civil war in China is soon to culminate in what will probably be the greatest battle that country has had in many years. The big armies of Gen. Chang Tso-Lin and Wu Pei-Fei are prepared for the conflict, near Peking. The president has called on them both to withdraw from that vicinity and from Chihli province and to send mediators for adjustment of their differences. The acting premier has asked the governor of each of the 18 provinces to send to Peking a commissioner to devise measures to rid the country of the armies, which are now the largest in the history of China. American, British and French warships have been sent to Chinese waters and the American legation guard at Peking has been reinforced. If necessary, the allied fleet will land troops to keep communications open between Peking and the sea.

MICHAEL COLLINS, head of the Irish Free State, recently accused the Ulster government of failing to live up to the peace agreement. This Sir James Craig indignantly denied in words that lead observers to believe a direct break has come. Sir James said that, notwithstanding the undertakings, armed incursions across the Ulster border continued and the border outrages have had a deplorable effect. He declared Sinn Feiners had committed outrages against the property of Ulster Catholics to intimidate those who were anxious to work in harmony with the northern govern-

ment. Fighting between the Free State forces and the "rebels" reached the proportions of a real battle on Thursday at Mullingar. The regulars captured the town. Dail Eireann met in Dublin and heard reports from the provisional ministers, who severely scored the element fighting the provisional government. De Valera was there, but had little to say. His followers, it was said, smiled and chuckled at the arraignment of the "rebels," who were accused of many robberies, train wrecks and other crimes. The Irish Catholic bishops issued a statement strongly indorsing the treaty with England, and unequivocally condemning republican militarism.

WARNED by Senator Watson that it would be "a bad precedent" to consider the house soldiers' bonus bill, because the President would certainly veto it—he had just been talking with Mr. Harding—the Republican members of the senate finance committee last week began consideration of a new bill formulated by Senator McCumber. Its outstanding feature is that it would require an outlay next year estimated at \$100,000,000, as compared with the Treasury department's estimate of \$300,000,000 required by the house bill. Representatives of the American Legion were consulted, but seemed to prefer the house measure.

AN AFTERMATH of the West Virginia coal field war of 1921, the trial of nine miners' union officials and members on charges of treason, has opened in Charles Town, W. Va. The most prominent of the defendants are C. Frank Keeney, president, and Frank Mooney, secretary of district 17. Forty-four others are accused of treason and many others of murder and conspiracy. Some of these have not been arrested and some have obtained change of venue. After motions to quash the indictments had been denied the court ruled for separate trials and William Blizard, known as "general of the march against Logan," was selected as the first defendant.

PRESIDENT HARDING is working out a plan for settling the coal strike and preventing future strikes, and which he hopes will serve to stabilize the industry. Details of the scheme have not been given out, but it is known that it does not include federal supervision of the coal industry, but provides for a standing commission empowered to deal with wage issues and other disputes as they arise.

FEDERAL aid for the upbuilding and development of the American merchant marine is given approval by the American Farm Bureau federation, which has wired President Harding as follows:

"While opposed to any subsidy on principle, we realize the necessity for developing the American merchant marine as naval auxiliary and as an agent in the development of foreign trade. We approve aid temporarily until our flag can be established on the high seas, but no longer. Subsidies, like tariffs, should be flexible, and not continue after industry becomes self-supporting. If subsidy be supported on naval grounds it is essential that merchant ships be available and used for training of naval reserves."

Just now our merchant marine is engaged in a little rate war with the Lamport & Holt line of Great Britain, which slashed passenger rates to South America. Chairman Lasker of the shipping board immediately made a cut below the Lamport & Holt rate and told that firm he was in the fight to a finish.

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